

# Re:union

April, 1995

## The Battle is Joined

# Repeal of Agency Fee

by Jim Young, Political Director

**A**s members know by now, the State Senate voted 26-24 and 27-23 on March 14th to repeal the "fair share" provision of agency fee for both state and local units and for school districts. Senator Edward Helfrick (R-Northumberland) sponsored the bills.

## The Scenario

The bills (S.B.9, S.B.291, S.B.711) have been sent to the State House for action. If passed by the House and signed by the Governor (who says he will do so), repeal of agency fee will return the lean and hungry visage of the parasitic "free-loader" of years past into our midst.

Repeal of agency fee will also cost the local over \$700,000 annually - nearly 20% of our revenue. Such a loss to our budget will force major cutbacks. Offices will close; staff will be furloughed; services will be affected.

We must defeat the repeal forces in the House. Our Harrisburg and regional offices are working with other SEIU locals, through the Pennsylvania State Council, and with AFSCME, AFT and PSEA to coordinate certain efforts. But, we can't win without serious rank and file participation.

## What Can We Do?

Contact your state representative *right away* and secure his/her commitment to fight repeal of agency fee. As soon as you know where the representative stands on repeal,

report your results to your chief steward, who will pass the word to the Harrisburg office. Even if you are unable to speak directly to the representative, request a firm answer from his or her staff.

## What Can We Say?

In speaking or writing to representatives or their staff, remember to make some or all of the following points:

**"You will find some people saying that they are for the so-called 'right-to-work' law, but they also believe in unions. This is absurd — it's like saying you are for motherhood but against children."**



Harry S. Truman  
33rd U.S. President - 1945-1953  
From remarks made during congressional consideration of the 1947 Taft-Hartley Act, passed by the 80th Congress over Truman's veto.

us from representing them in negotiations, meet and discuss and the broad enforcement of the contracts. That is where most of the money goes!

**Allowing a "free-ride" to non-members is like providing all benefits and services of government (roads, schools, fire and police protection, etc.) to people who refuse to pay taxes.**

(continued on page 7)

# Leadership Training -- WOW!

by Sheila K. Velazco, International Trustee

**T**his is how I feel when I look back at the three days in Hershey, Pennsylvania and recall the 350 unionists who gathered to learn, teach, encourage, support, plan, work and play.

The strength of the weekend was not just the training agenda, but also the enthusiasm of the activists attending — both the new and the seasoned representing the Local and the International — who gave of themselves to make the various sessions come alive. Who used the classes to create the beginnings of activity that, to be truly productive, must be continued at the shop level.

The training started with a speech by Karen Nussbaum who is one of SEIU's own. She co-founded 9-to-5 and led it for 20 years and in the early 1980's she was instrumental in moving it to affiliate with SEIU. Because of her national prominence in the office worker arena, the Clinton Administration recognized her skills and experience and appointed her to head the Women's Bureau at the Department of Labor. In her speech she gave us political insights and information which formed a basis for our first workgroup session dealing with organizing around broad political issues.

And what stars came out of that session! Union activists, energized by the feelings of solidarity and collective action, came back to report on their work. Using chants, demonstrations and posters, they delivered their message and work plans to the rest of us. This session showed that we have some budding organizers living within the ranks of our 668 membership!

The afternoon session built on organizing the shops around issues. The trainees stayed within their agency/employer units and developed plans on how to organize their worksites around issues that matter to their fellow employees — how to fight against the boss when he/she acts against the interests of the employees and the work they do; how to fight against the boss when he/she refuses to treat the workers with the respect and fairness they deserve and — through concerted action — can demand and receive.

Friday, at dinner, we had a special treat — and being new to SEIU myself, it warmed my union heart. The treat was a video, depicting what SEIU is all about — individual members joining together because they want a better life for themselves, their brothers, sisters and children. Speaking

through the voices of our members, we were shown that SEIU is Local 668 on a larger scale — men, women, white, African-American, Asian, Latino, young and old, gay, straight, secretaries, janitors, nurses and counsellors all with a dream of a work world in which we are respected and treated justly. Of a world where we are all valued for the experiences and skills we bring to the work table, to the union table.

Our Saturday morning session on "anti-racism" was built around the recognition that Local 668 is a union of diversity. And a recognition that racism exists and must be addressed and cut off at the knees. In one of the groups, we were reminded that racism is often encouraged by bosses and the rich because they want to keep workers down, to divide us, knowing that if we join together as one, we will be an unbeatable movement of workers. Diversity in our union and on the shop floor is a strength as it produces a larger pool of ideas resulting in decisions which are richer and more progressive.

On Sunday morning during our closing brunch, we heard from U.S. Congressman Chaka Fattah who demonstrated he believes in diversity, unionism and concerte action. We also heard from one of our own members, Jere Shaub, who recently resigned from his job at York County Children and Youth to run for a commissioner's office.

Additionally, at the Sunday brunch, we recognized — with a certificate — each of the union trainees for their efforts and involvement in making the leadership training worthwhile for all of us.

As I look back on the training, I breathe a sigh of relief, for several reasons. First, almost half were new stewards who have never been at statewide sessions. Secondly, because many were young which means this local has a solid future in carrying on the union's work. And finally, during this time of trusteeship, I see there are leaders — new and vibrant, older and experienced — who can take over the reins when we leave. The next president, secretary-treasurer and executive board members of Local 668, may well have been with us at the leadership training. What an exciting possibility!

# Legislative Update

by Jim Young, Political Director

## The Vote on Agency Fee

All 21 Senate Democrats voted against the repeal of agency fee. Two Republican Senators, Bell (Delaware County) and Uliana (Northampton County) also voted *no* on the local and state employee bills. Salvatore (NE Phila.), voted no only concerning teachers' agency fee.

Those who *stuck* with us should receive letters and calls of thanks from our members. Those who stuck it *to* us should be remembered in 1996.

## Prevailing Wage

Senator Russell Baker (R-Chester County) and others are leading the charge to dilute and eventually eliminate the prevailing wage law in Pennsylvania as it applies to school districts.

## Saving Taxpayers Money

A major appeal made by Baker and others is that if

school districts' contractors don't have to pay prevailing wage levels, the costs of building and repairing schools will fall dramatically, and these savings will be passed onto taxpay-

This is faulty logic. How long would it take for contractors to figure out that they can continue to bid as they did before -- and simply *pocket* the savings they make by paying workers less?

## A Safety Issue, Too

Critics of Baker question whether we want low-wage workers building and repairing the school buildings in which Pennsylvania children spend 180 days each year.

This bill impacts directly on our Building Trade brothers and sisters; as in many other instances, the struggle of other unions is truly our own. The Building Trades showed their understanding of this principle when *they lobbied for us* on agency fee. Now, we can do no less for them! So, call your Senator and explain why he/she should *not* support Senator Baker on this issue.

## A Mixed Bag - Danger Lurks

# Early Impressions of the New Administration

by Jim Young, Political Director

Meeting with Tom Pease, Secretary for Administration, has left a mixed impression upon SEIU officials. International Trustee Sheila Velazco, Political Director Jim Young, and Public Employee Division Head Dave Baker heard clearly the message of privatization.

While Pease offered no specifics beyond those YDCs and liquor stores cited by candidate Ridge during the campaign, the Secretary stated explicitly that no state agency or operation is immune from privatization. He did emphasize that each area will be approached with careful deliberation and that "everyone will be at the table" during the decision-making processes.

He also indicated that it is important to the Administration to remove our contract language on the protection of bargaining unit work! The Secretary stated that outgoing Casey officials told the Ridge transition team that the contract language is too restrictive.

On the bright side, Pease invited the Union's participation in a wide range of matters and procedures. In the case of Workers' Compensation reform, the Secretary expressed sympathy with the union's view that the last "reform" did little more than enrich the insurance companies.

While the Secretary seems personally amiable, bright and well-intentioned, we can expect to clash on some vital issues.

# Senior Member

C  
o  
r  
n  
e  
r

## Update

by Claude J. Saracino, Chair

You probably read, heard or have been personally contacted about the "trusteeship" placed upon Local 668 by our International Union. Our committee has not been affected.

Your Chair continues to represent you in and on organizations and committees conducive to our "retirees benefits". I recently attended Leadership Training sessions held in Hershey on March 3-5, and met the trustees from the International, Dave Baker and Sheila Velazco. Sheila is now the International Trustee.

When the local is ready to return to self-governance, there will be new elections of officers. As dues paying members of PSSU, I was advised by Sheila that our rights to vote in any forthcoming election will be addressed. I am hopeful that we will no longer be second class citizens in our "democratic" union. The trusteeship will end when order is restored and new elections completed. Meanwhile, one of our great leaders is lost to Local 668.

**DUES** - There will be a change. The senior members now pay dues that vary depending on the Chapter to which they belong. This is quite irregular. All senior members should be paying the same amount and soon will. In the meantime, please continue paying your dues as you have in the past. You will be notified later of any change in the amount. If you have any questions, please write to me at the Local 668 Office or call 1-800-932-0368. The next Senior Member Committee meeting will be held in May.



# Lehigh Contract Gains

Numerous gains are reflected in the new, three-year contract ratified by Local 668 members at the Lehigh Children and Youth and Mental Health/Mental Retardation agencies.

The pact, retroactive to January 1, was ratified February 21 by a 61-4 vote. Business Agent Neil Brown, the chief negotiator, said it covered 120 employees including such categories as social workers, clericals, fiscal personnel and case aides.

The employees were able to retain their increments and the first year will see a 2% pay raise. Raises in the next two years will mirror those of the other county workers. The union succeeded in getting 25 contract crisis workers into the bargaining unit. Also, new issues for labor/management discussions will include job classification review and vacation approval. The contract includes agency fee, increased sick leave with a unique "banking" system and longevity pay bonuses.

"The Mobilizing Committee did a great job designing buttons and a "lunch in" at the county cafeteria," Brown said.

Other contract highlights include obtaining additional senior caseworkers, increased shift differential and mileage reimbursement, more life insurance, a lateral transfer policy and equalization of overtime. Negotiating team members were Dan Meehan, Carol Johnson, Frank Mincavage, Marie Concannon, Dawn D'Andria, Debbie Montgomery, John Brobst and Jeff Petsko.

## Books to Memorialize Members

Recently, our fellow Local 668 members working at the Scranton Public Library were delighted to learn that we negotiated a memorial fund that will honor our deceased members. This endowment fund was established jointly by the union and the library who will each contribute an equal amount of funds that will be held in an interest bearing account with only the interest being used to purchase books.

The books that are acquired in this manner are identified with an acknowledgement plate inside the front cover. The Fund's donation may be augmented by additional funds in the future. This is truly a living gift to those who passed before us.

## Learning from Our Losses

No union wins *all* of its arbitrations. But we can learn, even from our losses. Even if the lesson is not to arbitrate that type of grievance again! Learning from our losses can save Business Agent time and Local 668 money and gives us ideas of how to tighten up contract language. Here's a look at some of the decisions on cases lost in the past several months:

### A Certified Copy Will Do

A Commonwealth department has the right to supply an inquiring employee with a *certified* copy of his/her personnel file. No travel time or expenses to go to Harrisburg to view the original.

### "If the Contract Language is Clear..."

A group of state workers working overtime *after* their normal work day were paid for 15-minute breaks. But co-workers working overtime *before* their workday received "nada." The arbitrator said the contract language was "clear and unambiguous." He said, "A paid rest break is available to an employee who works beyond his/her regular shift. It does not provide for a paid rest period for an employee who works overtime hours *before* his/her regularly scheduled shift."

### Insubordination at Nursing Home

Discharge of a maintenance employee was upheld

because of insubordination including loud and abusive language to his supervisor. Documented failure to follow orders and two prior suspensions made the case difficult to win.

### More than Enough

A private MH/MR agency did not violate the contract when it hired two cooks at a pay level higher than the minimum. Nor was the agency required to raise the pay of the other cooks to that level. The arbitrator pointed to the clause which reads, "The salaries established by this agreement are minimums which do not otherwise restrict the employer's discretion as to salaries."

### In an Emergency

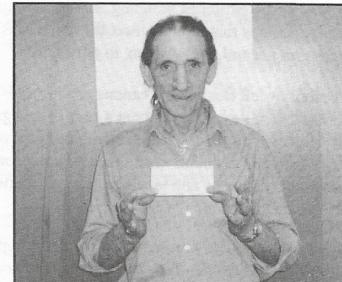
It was okay for a supervisor in an Energy Assistance Program to process one application taking about a half-hour's work. The union argued management should have called back an Energy Assistance Worker (EAW) to process that claim. The arbitrator disagreed, saying, "the processing of a single crisis application by the excluded supervisor... was not prohibited by the contract and did not cause a deprivation of seniority and related benefits to the bargaining unit."

## Nurses Aide Gets Settlement

Brother Molter realized the value of being a union member when he recently received a check for \$3,000 from his employer.

Laurel Hill Nursing Home was ordered by Arbitrator John Paul Simpkins to reinstate Nurses Aide Paul Molter and reimburse him back pay for unjustly discharging him last year for alleged patient abuse.

Just elected as Chief Shop Steward, Brother Molter attended the Leadership Conference, held recently in Hershey, and said that "it was great!" He added, "sometimes I feel isolated... it made me feel good to see how many people are involved with Local 668 -- it was a good group of people!"



Paul Molter holds his \$3,000 settlement check.

Photo by Paul Donovan

## SEIU African-American Womens' Caucus

by Camille Caleb, IMCW at Chester-Coatesville CAO

Recently, the Second Annual SEIU Womens' Regional Conference was held in Boston, Massachusetts. Ten African-American activist women came together to discuss issues and concerns of black women with SEIU. Ms. Charly Carter, SEIU Political Finance Coordinator, acted as facilitator to the group.

The driving desire of this group resulted in what can only be described as an historical event! We openly and honestly discussed issues and concerns that impacted the African-American women within SEIU. When the meeting adjourned, the consensus of the group was to officially become the SEIU African American Womens' Caucus, Eastern Region.

Further, the caucus directed Faraha Mbele, Marion William, Anita Meekins, Diane Mack, Deronia Thompson, Kim Plummer, Lillian Powell and Camille Caleb to develop a cohesive and comprehensive presentation to SEIU.

Acting Lead Facilitator Furaha Mbele made our caucus' presentation report to the full body of the conference members. The pride among the African-American women could be seen and heard through their repeated applause when the following goals were highlighted:

- ▼ African-American women in *real* decision-making positions at the local and national level of SEIU;
- ▼ *Real* support and resources to educate and mentor African-American women to be prepared to move upward within the leadership track of SEIU as well as within the AFL-CIO, and;
- ▼ *Real* participation in planning and coordinating the training workshops that directly meet the needs of African-Americans, in general, and women, in particular.

Before we left Boston, our caucus grew from 10 initial members to 38, all eager to become a part of our growing efforts! However, to "Keep Hope Alive" our goal must be to discuss common concerns with other African-American women within our shops and locals in order to recruit their support and membership.

African-American women have always had to struggle for the survival of our families. We were in the workforce long before the "Womens' Movement". For many of us, unionism is not just a passing trend. Of the 17% card-holding members left within the nation, SEIU's African-Americans

membership is 20% and growing! Now, we want to be given the opportunity to move to the highest levels of SEIU leadership to help shape SEIU's future!

However, our first priority will be to make our voices heard. One way to accomplish this is by recruiting other black women in our shops and locals to become members of our caucus. Another priority should be to make sure that we attend as many SEIU and other AFL-CIO functions as possible, in order to network with other African-American women and communicate their information back to the caucus.

We have no financial resources, so we must be willing to raise funds to attend a conference/workshop that would benefit our membership. Many of us are willing to accept the challenge "*by any means necessary*" to move our caucus to the forefront of SEIU. Will you make a commitment to do whatever you can to make your local African-American Womens' Caucus strong?

Please mail any new members' names, addresses, telephone numbers (home and work, if possible) and your local's number to:

Camille D. Caleb  
P.O. Box 1284  
Coatesville, Pa. 19320  
(610) 383-4069 (Fax same as home #)  
(610) 383-9900 or 383-9901 (work)

## Local 668 Scholarships

The Local 668 scholarship is a benefit for *members only*. All members in dues-paying status are eligible to apply for the Local 668 scholarship. The following rules apply:

- ✓ Only dues-paying members are eligible;
- ✓ You must be enrolled in a course at an accredited college or university for Spring/Summer term January 1 - July 31, 1995;
- ✓ Your application form must be accompanied by either cancelled check or a copy of your *paid* tuition for each course;
- ✓ Your application must be received in Harrisburg by June 15, 1995;
- ✓ Submit only one application for each course taken; (*More than one may disqualify your entries*)

**Agency Fee**  
(Continued from page 1)

The movement to repeal agency fee intends, purely and simply, to weaken public sector unions. It's like a right-to-work (for less) bill would be in the private sector.

In approaching legislators and staff, be polite and clear. You don't have to be an expert on the subject. (They aren't either). If they're against us, remind them, politely, that you vote.

**Where Do We Go  
From Here?**

The struggle over agency fee is only the first of several major legislative battles with those who have declared war on working Americans (See page 3). This is not a war we wanted, but it is a war that we *must* win. We must retain our resolve and our courage in the face of adversity. We must remember who brings this adversity to us.

*Remember to fight smart...  
the struggle continues!*

**Local 668 Scholarship Form**

Winners will be selected in August. Tuition will be paid to a maximum of \$100 per course to winners selected at random. A total of \$1,000 will be awarded in prizes.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Course \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_ Term \_\_\_\_\_ Cost \_\_\_\_\_

Shop \_\_\_\_\_ Steward \_\_\_\_\_

*I understand that no verification of payment disqualifies my application.*

Send to: **P.J. Fahnestock, Membership Clerk, SEIU Local 668,  
1037 Maclay St., Harrisburg, PA 17103.**

## Local 668 Store Items

The following items are available for sale:

|                                 |         |                                      |         |
|---------------------------------|---------|--------------------------------------|---------|
| Coffee Mugs                     | \$ 4.00 | Insulator Six-Pack Coolers           | \$ 7.00 |
| Satin Jackets (Youth - S, M, L) | \$20.00 | Nylon Square Bag                     | \$12.00 |
| Blue Baseball Caps              | \$ 6.00 | Button (COPE Fundraiser)             | \$ .50  |
| Bumper Stickers                 | \$ .25  | Portfolios                           | \$ 2.00 |
| Pennsylvania Shaped Lapel Pins  | \$ 3.50 | Pen                                  | \$ .25  |
| COPE T-Shirts (S, M)            | \$ 5.00 | Tote Bag                             | \$ 5.00 |
| COPE T-Shirts (XXL, XXXL)       | \$ 7.00 | Navy Blue T-Shirts (S, M, L, XL)     | \$ 8.00 |
| Car Sun Screens                 | \$ 3.50 | Navy Blue T-Shirts (XXL)             | \$10.00 |
| Cube Note Pads                  | \$ 4.00 | Gray T-Shirts (S, M, L, XL)          | \$ 9.00 |
| Outdoor Thermometers            | \$ 2.00 | Gray T-Shirts (XXL)                  | \$11.00 |
| Coupon Holders                  | \$ 1.00 | Adult Satin Jackets                  | \$50.00 |
|                                 |         | (Black or Turquoise - to be ordered) |         |

| Store Order Form            |  |          |              |
|-----------------------------|--|----------|--------------|
| Name: _____                 | Send this form to:<br>SEIU Local 668 - PSSU<br>1037 Maclay Street<br>Harrisburg, Pa. 17103<br>Attn: Bookkeeping Office |          |              |
| Item Description            | Size   | How Many | Total Amount |
|                             |  |          |              |
|                             |  |          |              |
|                             |  |          |              |
|                             |  |          |              |
|                             |  |          |              |
| Total Amount Enclosed _____ |  |          |              |

**Local 668 Scholarship Form**

Winners will be selected in August. Tuition will be paid to a maximum of \$100 per course to winners selected at random. A total of \$1,000 will be awarded in prizes.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Course \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_ Term \_\_\_\_\_ Cost \_\_\_\_\_

Shop \_\_\_\_\_ Steward \_\_\_\_\_

*I understand that no verification of payment disqualifies my application.*

Send to: **P.J. Fahnestock, Membership Clerk, SEIU Local 668,  
1037 Maclay St., Harrisburg, PA 17103.**

## Martinez to Puerto Rico

**R**ay Martinez, former Philadelphia Chapter President, was picked by SEIU to go to Puerto Rico to help organize public service workers who were recently granted the right to unionize. A long-time Local 668 activist, Ray will be on a three-month project.

Dr. Pedro J. Rossello, the Governor of Puerto Rico, initiated the bill extending unionization rights to the island's 280,000 government workers.

## Northampton Gains Improved Contract

**P**ay raises and agency fee highlight the new three-year contract approved by Local 668 employees at Northampton Human Services in Easton. Business Agent Neil Brown, chief negotiator, said the pact, retroactive to January 1, covers 150 case-workers, clericals, nurses, fiscal employees and case aides.

Year one has a 3% pay raise, the second year has one increment including an extra step and the final year sees another 3% raise.

Brown noted that three unions were negotiating with the county at the same time. "We combined our mobilizing efforts very effectively," he said. "We had stickers with creative slogans, picketing and leafletting of the



Courthouse, joint rallies and filling up of County Council meetings."

Other contract highlights include improved lunch allowance and longevity pay, an alternate work schedule option, yearly air quality testing and a family sick day. The healthcare package has no co-pay the first year, in the second year a \$10 pay and co-pay for non-single coverage.

Also, obtained were a free HMO option, and the establishment of a Cost Containment Committee from which savings will be used to reduce the co-pay.

Negotiating team members were: Gloria Juless, Nancy Kruzcek, Linda Stocker, Veronica Dech, Monica Roberts, Norman Weeks and Fred Avila.

**Pennsylvania Social Services Union  
1037 Maclay Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17103**



Sheila K. Velazco, International Trustee  
David H. McCann, Deputy Trustee  
Mary Ann Collins, Deputy Trustee  
Valarie Long, Deputy Trustee  
Lisa Hunsicker, Editor

Mary A. Waters  
1019 Lackawanna Avenue  
Mayfield, PA 18433

Non-Profit Organization

U.S. Postage  
PAID

Harrisburg, PA  
Permit No. 141